



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Glacier National Park  
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Biosphere Reserve  
World Heritage Site

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## Glacier National Park News Release

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### **NPS Releases Environmental Assessment to Rehabilitate Belton Bridge** *Public comments sought during 30-day review period*


WEST GLACIER, MONT. – Officials at Glacier National Park have announced a proposal to rehabilitate the historic Belton Bridge to improve its structural integrity and to make it available once again for pedestrian, horse, and bicycle traffic across the Middle Fork of the Flathead River at West Glacier. The bridge is located one-half mile east of the park headquarters complex.

The proposed action as described in the *Environmental Assessment to Rehabilitate Belton Bridge* also includes gravel surfacing of approximately one-half mile of the Belton Entrance Road trail between the bridge and the park headquarters area, which is used as a pedestrian, horse, and bicycle path. Public comments are being sought during a 30-day review period that ends Tuesday, May 27, 2003.

Glacier National Park prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for this project in 2001 that outlined a two-phase rehabilitation plan. National Park Service (NPS) managers at Glacier determined in that assessment that rehabilitation of the bridge itself would not result in an adverse effect under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

At that time the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the results of the initial EA in a “Finding of No Adverse Effect” for Phase I of the project, but stipulated that additional consultation be undertaken. The SHPO also specified that the NPS prepare a “Determination of Eligibility” for listing the bridge on the National Register of Historic Places prior to the beginning of Phase II.

Phase I was completed in summer 2002 and a Determination of Eligibility was prepared. In the fall of 2002, the NPS and the SHPO determined that the bridge was deemed eligible as a national register property, and therefore, Phase II would result in an adverse effect on the characteristics that qualify the bridge for listing on the National Register. Consequently, a new EA was prepared because of that “adverse effect” finding.



The new proposal includes gravel surfacing of a 10-foot-wide trail on the abandoned Belton Entrance Road trail for bicycle, horse and pedestrian use. The previous EA called for continued use of the road as a path, but not for surfacing. According to park superintendent Mick Holm, “The NPS believes the abandoned Belton Entrance Road qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and plans to treat it as a cultural resource.” He added, “Its appearance as a historic, graveled road would be maintained, but its usage would be limited to pedestrians, horses and bicycles.

A copy of the EA may be viewed on the park’s web site ([www.nps.gov/glac/pdf/beltono403.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/glac/pdf/beltono403.pdf)). Comments may be submitted electronically to: [glac\\_public\\_comments@nps.gov](mailto:glac_public_comments@nps.gov) or submitted in writing by mailing them to Glacier National Park, Attn: Belton EA, West Glacier, Montana 59936.

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